

Revised: 27 March 2004

Editorial note:

After the initial posting of this reprint, Dr. Tilman Frasch (Manchester Metropolitan University) sent the following useful and cautionary note on the 19th century translation below: "This is the first of several attempts to read and translate the text of an inscription Burmese monks left at Bodhgaya when visiting the site in 1296-98 AD. Burney had reached Bodhgaya in the company of a Burmese delegation to the Governor-General of India, and presumably he was helped by the Burmese in his translation. However, neither his nor any (but one) of the later translations is fully reliable, as usually the name Putasin is misread as Pyutasin (I. 11 of the Burmese version reprinted here). Putasin (or Buddhasena) is the name of the local ruler of Bodhgaya; it was mixed with the epithet Pyu-ta-sin (or "Lord of 100.000 Pyu") which the Rakhaing Minthami Egyin attributed to king Alaungsithu. The only reliable translation comes from G. H.Luce, Sources of Early Burma History, in Southeast Asian History and Historiography (Festschrift GEH Hall), eds. C.D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters, Ithaca 1976, p. 41-42."

Translation of an Inscription in the Pali Character and Burmese Language, on a stone at Buddh Gya, in Behar

From Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal May, 1834

When the Burmese ambassador MENGY MAHA CHESU and his suite were on their way to the Upper Provinces, to visit the Governor General; they took the opportunity of paying their devotions at the celebrated Buddhist temple near Gya. There, as usual making notes of every occurrence, they took copies of an ancient inscription in the Pali character, discovered by them, in a half-buried situation near the *Maha Bodhi gach* or sacred papal tree, on the terrace of the temple. A copy of their manuscript having come into RATNA PAULA's hands, he had obliged me by lithographing the text; as a sequel to the more lengthy inscription from Ramree in the present number.

It will be remembered that there is a near coincidence in the names of the kings of Ava, alluded to in the two inscriptions; although an interval of more than 500 years separates the two in date; this can only be cleared up by a better knowledge of the history of the country, than we now possess. In the Burmese chronological table, published in Crawfurd's Embassy, SATO-MANG-BYA (probably the same as *Sado-meng*) only founded Angwa or Ava in the Sakkaraj year 726. In 667-8, TA-CHI-SHANG-SI-HA-SU reigned in *Panya*; his grand-son founded and reigned in *Chit-gaing*.

At page 111, Lieut. BURT refers to an unintelligible inscription at Gya, mentioned by Mr. Harrington; but that contained only one line, and was in a different locality. The present inscription seems therefore to have escaped attention up to the present moment; it is now recorded as furnishing an authentic note on the construction of the *Buddha Gya* monument in the year 1305 A.D.; for it may be presumed that the previous Chaityas and Buddhist structures had been long before levelled with the ground, and the inscription states, that previous missions to reconstruct the edifice had been unsuccessful. As proving that this spot is held in peculiar veneration by the Burmese, it may be remembered that in 1823, a deputation of Buddha priests was sent from Amarapura, by the Burman emperor, to perform the obsequies of his predecessor, recently deceased, at the shrine of *Buddha Gya*.

"This is one of the 84,000 shrines erected by SRI DHARM ASOKA, ruler of the world (*Jambodwip*), at the end of the 218th year of Buddha annihilation, (B.C. 326) upon the holy spot in which BHAGAVÁN (Buddha) tasted milk and honey (*madhupayasa*). In lapse of time, having fallen into disrepair, it was rebuilt by a priest named NAIKMAHANTA. Again, being ruined, it was restored by Raja SADO-MANO. After a long interval it was once more

demolished, when Raja SEMPYU-SAKHEN-TARA-MENGI appointed his *gúru* SRI-DHAMMA RAJA-GUNA to superintend the building. He proceeded to the spot with his disciple, SRI KÁSYAPA, but they were unable to complete it, although aided in every way by the Raja. Afterwards VARADASI-NAIK-THERA petitioned the Raja to undertake it, to which he readily assented, commissioning prince PYUTASING to the work, who again deputed the younger PYUSAKHENG and his minister RATHA, to cross over and repair the sacred building. It was thus constructed a fourth time, and finished on Friday the 10th day of *Pyadola*, in the Sakkaraj year 667 (A.D. 1305). On Sunday, the 8th of *Tachaon-mungla*, 668 (A.D. 1306), it was consecrated with splendid ceremonies and offerings of food, perfumes, banners, and lamps, and *púja* of the famous ornamented tree called *calpa-vriksha*; and the poor (two?) were treated with charity, as the Raja's own children? Thus was completed this meritorious act, which will produce eternal reward and virtuous fruits. May the founders endure in fame, enjoy the tranquillity of *Nirbhan*, and become *Arahanta* on the advent of Arya Maitri (the future Buddha)."

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in a stone at Buddh Gya in Behar.

R. Paula scrips.